

RESOLUTION NO. 20210610-039

Current Conditions

WHEREAS, agriculture is extremely susceptible to the impacts of climate change, and climate models show that global crop production will decline every decade for the rest of this century due to drought, heat, and flooding; and

WHEREAS, water supplies in Central Texas are vulnerable to climate-related threats including drought, floods, and invasive species, and the region's population is expected to double by 2040 – placing even greater stress on our water resources; and

WHEREAS, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Special Report, "Climate Change and Land," notes that formulating effective adaptation strategies could reduce or even avoid some of the negative impacts of climate change on food security; and

WHEREAS, the weather emergency that occurred on February 15, 2021, and lasted the greater part of a week underscored the fragility of our local and regional food systems; and

City of Austin Food Access Initiatives

WHEREAS, in 2013, City Council adopted the Urban Farms Ordinance and cited the ways that farms and community gardens support the City's Climate Protection and Zero Waste initiatives by:

- providing access to nutritious foods produced with fewer carbon resources than those shipped to the community from other regions;

- increasing plants in the environment and thus reducing the need for energy required for cooling;
- increasing stormwater collection;
- contributing to food security for the City; and

WHEREAS, Council Resolution No. 20160303-020 directed the City Manager to develop recommendations related to food access and to prioritize it as a focus area for the City of Austin Equity Office; and

WHEREAS, Council Resolution No. 20170302-034 directed the City Manager to develop recommendations for reforming the City's economic development incentives policies to, among other things, increase access to healthy food options in the Eastern Crescent; and

WHEREAS, in 2018, Council adopted Austin Strategic Direction 2023, which prioritizes community-informed initiatives to make healthy and affordable foods easily accessible to all, especially for Austin's vulnerable populations and historically marginalized communities; and

WHEREAS, Council Resolution No. 20181018-039 directed the City Manager to develop an incentives program for grocery stores and other investments in Austin's food system; and

WHEREAS, Council Resolution No. 20190808-078's declaration of a climate emergency also called for immediate and coordinated mobilization by the City to address the causes and consequences of climate change, including the considering of a range of innovative strategies such as community agriculture and local food access; and

WHEREAS, Council Resolution No. 20200611-050 set a goal of zero racial disparities under the safety strategic outcome in Strategic Direction 2023 and directed the City Manager to craft recommendations to mitigate racial disparities in particular areas of concern, including food access; and

City of Austin Food System Resilience Efforts

WHEREAS, Council Resolution No. 20190509-019 directed the City Manager to develop recommendations for creating a comprehensive, community-wide resilience plan, and supporting the general tenets of the Green New Deal, which include securing community resiliency and access to healthy food; and

WHEREAS, Council Resolution No. 20200507-022 directed the City Manager to build on various other plans related to climate resilience and to create “Resilient Austin: A Comprehensive Community Resilience Plan” to “reflect this more complete goal of becoming a resilient community which can survive, adapt, and thrive in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, systemic inequities, or significant sources of stress”; and

WHEREAS, the September 2020 staff memo issued in response to Resolution No. 20200507-022 emphasizes Austin’s critical role as a regional hub for resilience planning in Central Texas and cites the challenge of accessing healthy food as one of our community primary stressors; and

WHEREAS, in 2020, the Office of Sustainability released a draft version of the Austin Climate Equity Action Plan (“draft Plan”) which endeavors to mitigate climate change and foster community resilience, particularly in communities of color which bear the brunt of climate hazards due to environmental injustice and institutional underinvestment; and

WHEREAS, the draft Plan contains strategies and recommendations relating to food and product consumption with the overall goal of ensuring that by 2030, “100% of Austinites, with a focus on the food insecure, can access a pro-climate, pro-health food system that is community-driven, prioritizes regenerative agriculture, supports dietary and health agency, prefers plant-based over animal-based foods and minimizes food waste”; and

WHEREAS, the draft Plan includes strategies for meeting this goal, including building a regional food system network to facilitate and coordinate large-scale, pro-health, pro-climate food purchasing and distribution from regenerative agricultural producers; and

WHEREAS, in addition, the draft Plan calls for the expansion of the City’s circular economy program and the use of available City-owned space and/or the leveraging of partnerships for rent-subsidized incubation spaces, grants, loans and technical assistance for qualifying circular organizations; and

WHEREAS, in January of 2021, the Joint Sustainability Committee recommended that the City of Austin support the Glasgow Food and Climate declaration, which endeavors to bring together municipalities all over the world to commit to developing sustainable food policies and to centering food and farming within our global response to our climate emergency; and

Food System Planning

WHEREAS, in 2014, Hawaii initiated the Aloha+Challenge to address six metrics from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 including “clean energy transformation, local food production, management of natural resources, solid waste reduction, creating smart and sustainable communities, and building and educating a green workforce”; and

WHEREAS, the plan includes an online dashboard so the public can track the progress toward these goals; and

WHEREAS, New York City's "Food Forward NYC," provides a 10-year plan to achieve a more equitable, sustainable, and healthy food system by 2031 and is premised on five overarching goals:

- All New Yorkers have multiple ways to access healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food.
- New York City's food economy drives economic opportunity and provides good jobs.
- The supply chains that feed New York City are modern, efficient, and resilient.
- New York City's food is produced, distributed, and disposed of sustainably.
- New York City will support the systems and knowledge to implement the 10-year food policy plan.

WHEREAS, on April 4, 2021, the Austin Travis County Food Policy Board recommended that the City of Austin and Travis County support and fund an Austin/Travis County Food System Plan and that such a plan be developed through an equitable, inclusive process led by a Community Advisory Board comprised of community and business members impacted by food system inequities; and

Public Land for Community Benefits

WHEREAS, the Austin City Council has long advocated for the redevelopment of City-owned land for the furtherance of community priorities and

public benefits, such as affordable housing, emergency shelters for individuals experiencing homelessness, permanent supportive housing, creative spaces, affordable lease spaces for nonprofits, workforce development, childcare, open space and recreation, environmental protection, and the advancement of transportation goals; and

WHEREAS, in August of 2015, the Office of Real Estate Services, in conjunction with other City Departments, issued a memo detailing surplus tracts of land that could be dispossessed and sold; and

WHEREAS, thus far, those sales have not occurred and three of the identified tracts have been transferred to other Departments for reuse; and

WHEREAS, Council Resolution No. 20161103-045 directed the City's Strategic Facilities Governance Team to collaborate with AISD, Travis County, Capital Metro, ACC, and other public entities on identifying opportunities within each entity's real estate portfolio for redevelopment of public land, joint-use agreements, and other arrangements that might help achieve shared priority policy goals; and

City-Owned Land for Food Access

WHEREAS, in 2014, Council approved Resolution No. 20140807-106, which directed the City Manager to work with community members to develop goals and a vision for use of the City-owned property located on the northeast corner of South Pleasant Valley Road and East William Cannon Drive; and

WHEREAS, staff's report in response stated that the developable land appeared to have four potential reuse scenarios that could meet the expressed

community goals, with the first reuse scenario being development of the land as a community-centered project related to food access and food security; and

WHEREAS, Council then approved Resolution No. 20141211-129, which directed the City Manager to continue efforts and outreach on the potential development of portions of the former Williamson Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant site to enhance the Dove Springs community and to report to Council, relevant boards, and commissions on a semi-annual basis for input as the development plan is refined; and

WHEREAS, the City has not yet initiated a development plan for the approximately seven developable acres; and

WHEREAS, in 2018, City staff proposed selling 4711 Winnebago to a private developer, but the Council passed Resolution No. 20180614-069 to retain the tract for community benefit, and the site was later leased at a low cost to the nonprofit Urban Roots for the purposes of advancing urban agriculture, addressing food insecurity, and providing learning and employment opportunities for local youth; and

WHEREAS, the City has begun to use the Onion Creek flood buyout areas to establish sustainable farming practices to address long-standing food access issues in the area; and

WHEREAS, the City of Austin entered into an interlocal agreement with Travis County to commission a study addressing food accessibility and assessing 10 city-owned parcels for their potential as food retail outlets; and

WHEREAS, in May of 2019, the Austin-Travis County Food Policy Board recommended that agricultural production be considered as a best use of publicly acquired land on property with a USDA prime farmland designation; and

COVID-19's Impact on Food Insecurity

WHEREAS, as the pandemic strains our community's economy and highlights preexisting fractures in our existing social support systems, food access disparities have grown dangerously more heightened and pronounced; and

WHEREAS, in June of 2020, the Austin Travis County Food Policy Board recommended that the City and Travis County do the following:

- review staffing and resources invested in the local food system to ensure sufficient capacity and authority both to respond to the food crisis created by the pandemic as well as to create a resilient, sustainable regional food system;
- ensure that major planning and resource-allocation decisions are driven by those most negatively and inequitably impacted by the current food system;
- identify gaps in current data, disaggregate data by race, and partner with existing community efforts to collect qualitative and quantitative information to inform regional needs;
- commit additional resources; and

WHEREAS, during the pandemic, the City of Austin and community partners developed the Eating Apart Together (EAT) initiative, a meal and water delivery program developed in response to COVID-19, and as of October 2020, the

EAT initiative has served more than 500,000 meals to people experiencing homelessness; and

WHEREAS, prior to COVID-19, there were gaps in food availability for individuals experiencing homelessness, with areas such as Downtown having multiple sources throughout the week and more limited options on weekends, and some areas of the City with few options at all; and

WHEREAS, a needs assessment and plan will help address food insecurity and access among our unsheltered community, not just as the challenges of COVID-19 continue to evolve, but also in post-pandemic Austin; and

WHEREAS, Council approved Resolution No. 20200507-058, directing the City Manager to allocate funding for caregiver meals to be prepared by local restaurants impacted by COVID-19 and delivered through Austin-area school district school meal distribution sites; and

WHEREAS, according to a January 2021 memo, UT Dell Medical School analyzed 2-1-1 calls related to food need and information about resource availability and identified areas including 78754 (Dessau Road/East Walnut Creek), 78747 (Creedmoor), and 78741 (East Riverside/Montopolis) as having high volumes of food need calls to 2-1-1 but comparatively few food resources such as food pantries or distributions in their areas, and areas such as 78728 (Wells Branch) as having many households and individuals receiving distributions, but no food pantries where community members can receive food regularly; and

Current Food System Needs

WHEREAS, experts have begun encouraging the practice of regenerative farming, a technique of farming which attempts to mitigate and combat climate

change by restoring soil biodiversity, reducing carbon emissions, and improving water supply; and

WHEREAS, regenerative farming aligns with and supports the City of Austin's environmental goals and resource planning; and

WHEREAS, Austin has no public cold storage facilities, which would allow our community to store local food, better prepare for times of food shortages, and provide residents with more access to whole foods, fresh vegetables, fruits, and perishable produce; and

WHEREAS, during the 2013-2014 community discussion about urban farming, the Economic Development Department committed to researching potential locations for a slaughterhouse and food processing facilities, but these needs remain unaddressed; and

WHEREAS, using city-owned land to meet identified gaps in our food system will help Austin expand its role in our regional food system and enhance community resilience; **NOW, THEREFORE**,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY OF AUSTIN CITY COUNCIL:

The City of Austin is committed to rectifying the racial disparities that plague our community's food system and strengthening our community food system infrastructure so we can endure future disasters and protect the health of every household in our community.

The City Manager shall lead the planning and implementation of a just and resilient regional food system. This scope of work should include appropriately resourcing strategic planning for ending food insecurity, emergency planning and

coordination for inevitable disruptions to supply, and values-based procurement for equitable economic and health outcomes and environmental regeneration.

The City Manager is directed to initiate a planning process and multi-lingual engagement strategy for the creation of the Austin Travis County Food System Plan (“the Plan”), which shall convene experts and stakeholders to craft a 5-year plan that will address, at a minimum, sustainable operational structures, food access initiatives, food worker programs, and financing solutions to strengthen and address historical disparities in our community and enhance our community’s food system resilience. This process should include an equitable, inclusive process led by a Community Advisory Board comprised of community and business members impacted by food system inequities. The planning documents include planning efforts around food production, processing, distribution, food security and access, sustainability, and waste. Understanding funding constraints, the City Manager is shall respond to the above direction with creativity and flexibility, as needed.

The City Manager is directed to engage Travis County with the prospect of jointly collaborating on this initiative.

The City Manager is directed to return to Council with an engagement strategy, recommendations regarding the formation and membership of the Community Advisory Board, identified stakeholders, and timeline for finalization no later than August 2021. Should additional resources be required, the City Manager shall return to Council with a budget item for consideration prior to the FY 21-22 budget process. Once the Plan has been finalized, the City Manager shall create an online dashboard to monitor the progress made on the goals, recommendations, and action items within the Plan.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

Apart and separate from the Austin Travis County Food System Plan, the City Manager shall conduct or seek a community partner to conduct a needs assessment regarding food insecurity and access in our unsheltered community during times of both non-crisis and crisis. The City Manager is directed to engage in this effort social service providers, faith-based groups, the Austin Homelessness Advisory Council and other individuals with lived experience to assess current food access points in our community for individuals who are unsheltered, determine gaps or redundancies in our community around these needs, and return to Council with the results regarding food needs of our community's unsheltered.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager shall review and recommend eligible financial resources to support the growth and stabilization of the local food system, including possible funds from the American Rescue Plan, bonds, and Chapter 380 financial incentives. The City Manager shall also explore what financial vehicles other areas such as New York City and Hawaii have used for such purposes and shall provide Council with a memorandum detailing possible options no later than August 2021.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager shall estimate costs required to address the needs identified in Community Engagement and Health Equity Division of UT Dell Medical School survey for the Food Access Task Force and the June 2020 COVID-19 food system response recommendations from the Austin Travis County Food Policy Board and shall provide these to Council in conjunction with the proposed Fiscal Year 2022 budget.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Manager is directed to create a prioritization matrix that can be used to assess city-owned land for the purposes of strengthening our local and regional food system and promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion in urban farm opportunities. The City Manager is directed to engage Travis County to assess interest in leveraging its respective real estate portfolio for such an endeavor, as well.

Upon completion of this matrix, the City Manager is directed to build on the work of the previous analyses described above and to identify a tract or multiple tracts of City-owned land that can be used for the following purposes:

- cold storage;
- regenerative agriculture;
- slaughterhouse uses;
- food processing facilities;
- alternative agricultural production such as vertical agriculture and hydro/aeroponics;
- direct-to-consumer market spaces; and
- other land-deficient food system needs identified by the City Manager.

The City Manager is directed to build upon the City research that has been conducted thus far, such as the analysis of the Williamson Creek Wastewater

Treatment Plan and the surplus tracts identified in the 2015 Office of Real Estate Services memo.

The City Manager is further directed to bring the list of all properties identified in preferred ranking for such a purpose(s) to the Public Health Committee and via memorandum no later than August 2021.

Upon the release of the memorandum to the full City Council and presentation to the Public Health Committee, the City Manager shall construct a Request For Information or Request For Proposals for the lease of identified tracts as appropriate for the aforementioned uses and shall apprise the Public Health Committee about the scope of the Request and solicit feedback. The City Manager shall return to Council to approve the Request before it is issued. Once the Request has closed and the City Manager has assessed the offers, the City Manager is directed to present the results of the Request process during a Council work session. The City Manager shall seek Council approval prior to negotiation of an agreement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

Understanding that staff have identified a physical location for EAT only until the end of June, and that the Emergency Operations Center is phasing out EAT as a COVID-19 emergency response operation based on changing needs and resources, the City Manager shall engage appropriate nonprofits or other partners who may be interested in funding and managing its operations. Prior to the end of June, the City Manager is directed to provide sufficient notice to contracted food vendors, community partners, and the public. If external funds are available to pay for this initiative and a physical location is the only pending need, the City

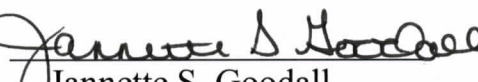
Manager shall alert City Council so that Council Members can provide additional direction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED:

The City Council affirms its endorsement of the Glasgow Food and Climate Declaration and directs the City Manager to pledge the City of Austin's support in advance of the Conference of Parties of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC) in Glasgow in November 2021.

ADOPTED: June 10, 2021

ATTEST:


Jannette S. Goodall
City Clerk